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REVIEW & OUTLOOK | DECEMBER 30, 2008

The Philanthropy Shakedown

Give to 'minority-led' charities, or else.

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In 2006, Publix Supermarket Charities donated almost \$30 million to causes that included Habitat for Humanity, the March of Dimes and United Way. But Al Piña isn't satisfied. Mr. Piña, the chairman of the Florida Minority Community Reinvestment Coalition, believes Publix isn't giving enough to people of color who donate to other people of color. Welcome to the latest trend in racial extortion.

According to a study that Mr. Piña commissioned from the California-based activist group Greenlining, Publix gave only 2.81% of its grants in 2006 to "minority-led organizations." Minority-led is defined as groups whose staff and board of directors are 50% racial minority and whose mission and programs "are aimed predominantly towards communities of color." Overall, Florida's top 10 foundations (as measured by asset size) didn't fare much better, giving on average 5.48% of their grants to minority-led outfits.

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But who cares? Doesn't it matter more what these groups accomplish rather than who runs them? Mr. Piña is outraged by the suggestion. "No one can convince me that United Way provides better service directly

to minorities than a minority-led organization," he told us recently. "We're in the trenches. There is no way that [nonminorities] can connect and have more traction and effect than organizations with leaders who live in those communities day in and day out."

Mr. Piña's claim would seem, at the very least, in need of some statistical validation. But then Greenlining's survey doesn't ask where the leaders of "minority-led" organizations reside. We'd guess that plenty of them live comfortably outside of Florida's worst neighborhoods. The Florida report, like the studies Greenlining has done in other states, makes clear that the agitation for "diversity in philanthropy" isn't about donating to causes that help minorities. It's a jobs program for college-educated minorities who want to work in nonprofits.

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As for foundations that focus on nonminority causes, Mr. Piña says they need to rethink their priorities. "We need to create a leadership shift, to change how foundations view inner-city revitalization versus giving to the opera versus giving to protect the Everglades." Philanthropies like the Turner Global Foundations, whose cash goes largely to environmental protection, had

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better get with the program. That means you, Ted.

To accomplish this redistribution of charity, Greenlining says Florida foundations "should track diversity information for grantee organizations, either voluntarily or through legislative mandates." Last year, Greenlining almost succeeded in getting such legislation passed in California. It was stopped only when California's largest foundations agreed to pay off California's minority-led organizations. This month the foundations announced the details and cost of that plan - to the tune of about \$30 million. Greenlining's director, Orson Aguillar, told us "that's a good start" but the money isn't "a substitute for legislation."

Mr. Piña worries that his own philanthropy shakedown won't be as successful. He says the Florida legislature's "extreme right-wing methodology" will make it difficult to force this issue into law. So Mr. Piña is heading to the U.S. Congress, and especially the Black, Hispanic and Asian Caucuses, to gin up support. It's about time that leaders of the foundation world -- those who care about results more than politics -- stand up and call this the race-baiting money grab it is.

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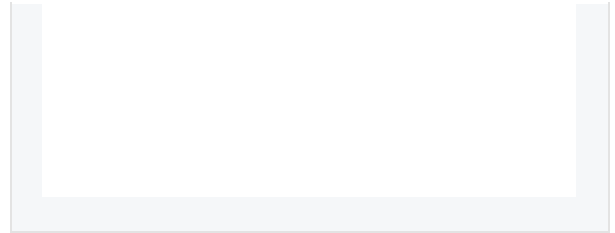


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